

Ad Hoc Bedford Museum Study Committee Minutes of October 21, 2014

Attending: members, Gaye Carpenter, Linda Christen, Angelo Colao, Kara Kerwin, Selectmen William Moonan, chair, and Mike Rosenberg, Christopher Weisz and Francis Gicca, Bedford Historical Society representative. Also present were Jan van Steenwijk and Donald Corey of the Historical Society. The minutes of the Sept. 29 meeting were approved, 6-0-1.

Mr. Corey explained town funding mechanics, comparing Capital Expenditure Committee review with community Preservation funds, including a state share. This program was designed to meet underserved projects, he said. Mr. Corey added that restoration projects are also eligible for Massachusetts Historical Commission grants. Non-historic projects are at a funding disadvantage, he said, and would have trouble achieving Capital Expenditure Committee approval.

Mr. Corey suggested a visit to the Commonwealth Museum at the state archives in Dorchester for conceptual ideas. He said the local museum needs knowledgeable input from the Historical Society. He also emphasized the advantages of a single rather than multiple museum locations.

Based on his experience, he said, exhibit space should be at least 800 square feet, plus 400 square feet for office space, and 1,000 square feet to accommodate meetings of up to 70 attendees. The ideal total minimum area he recommended was 2,700 square feet. (Written comments attached.)

Mr. Gicca displayed photographs of the Sandwich, NH, museum, featuring a large house and attached barn. This works because meetings take place in the barn, and people pass by the exhibits on the way, he said. He also noted creative use of technology, including QR codes at exhibits.

Ms. Carpenter reported on her visit to the Cape Ann Museum in Gloucester – an annex to an old house plus an adjacent house for meetings and archives.

Mr. Moonan recounted the Oct. 14 “free-ranging” discussion with the library trustees. Ms. Christen, Mr. Gicca and Mr. van Steenwijk also attended. There was an emphasis on the many connections between the library and the Historical Society. Mr. Moonan said that although no vote was taken, he left with the impression that the trustees would not support a museum presence in the library.

The chairman said committee members need to look at other spaces. He suggested starting with the comprehensive spreadsheet prepared by Ms. Christen, focusing on many towns throughout the state with related demographic characteristics to Bedford and museums. Mr. Colao recommended seeking space with the potential for growth. Mr. Gicca added that ultimately a museum could move to space outgrown by a municipal department.

Members committed to visit the following facilities: Ms. Carpenter, Amesbury, Andover and Burlington; Mr. Colao, Danvers and Wakefield; Mr. Moonan, Holden; Mr. Rosenberg, Stoneham and Westwood; Mr. Weisz, Marblehead, Westford and Winchester. Mr. Moonan asked members to advise him when visits are completed. Mr. van Steenwijk noted that the Woburn museum can accommodate gatherings of as many as 600.

Mr. van Steenwijk shared conceptual drawings of additions to the Stearns Building that would accommodate a museum as well as additional space for the Police Department.

The next meeting was scheduled for November 18.